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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH ROMANIAN MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
GHEORGHE TINCA
BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
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COL. GRIGORE BUCIU: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to today's joint Romanian-American press conference. Mr. William Perry, Secretary of Defense of the United States closes his visit in a little bit. We inform you that conversations took place at the Ministry of National Defense and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with the President of Romania Ion Iliescu. For this important event, which highlights Romanian-American military cooperation, Mr. Secretary of Defense William Perry and Mr. Minister Gheorghe Tinca would like to make short declarations and then will respond to questions. Minister Tinca, the microphone is yours.

MINISTER TINCA: I thank you very much and I am apologizing to my fellow Romanians for using English this time but I would like to save time. First of all I would like to thank very much Secretary Perry and Mrs. Perry for the visit they are about to conclude in Romania; everything was wonderful but there is a regret and this regret I think is reciprocal. The regret is that the visit was very short. It was short, but not short enough not to let us have the opportunity to convey to Mr. Perry the warmth of the Romanian government and Romanian Ministry of Defense about the importance of Romania in the geostrategic context of today.

In this connection we tried in the discussions in the Ministry of Defense to let Mr. Secretary know that we are developing a very responsible foreign policy, a defense policy which is taking into account the interest of stability and security of Romania and also the interest of stability and security of the region. I had the privilege to inform Secretary Perry about the stage of reform in the Romanian army. We have been very concrete in this respect. We have talked about ways and means by which the United States may assist us in further unfolding this reform in the army.

Another great deal of discussion was referring to Partnership for Peace. We have been informed by Secretary Perry about the program, the individual program for Romania, which is under negotiation and very soon will be concluded in Brussels. I think, both of us, we agreed that the actions which would be contained in this program have to be concrete and involve not only partners but also members of NATO. We have exchanged views about this. I have to confess that I got very valuable suggestions from Secretary Perry. We have also talked about the cooperation between the Romanian army and the U.S. army. We have been of the same opinion in appreciating that cooperation is good, and there is room for improvement, and there was also a kind of commitment for both sides to go further with this cooperation and even to strengthen it. Here again we, both of us, we have

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expressed preference for concrete action and practical military exercises in the future – this year and probably next year.

I have to conclude by saying that I benefitted a lot from this discussion we had at the Ministry of Defense. I hope Secretary Perry found the discussion at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also the discussion with the President even more interesting than what we had at the Ministry of Defense. I would like to conclude by thanking Secretary Perry again and especially Mrs. Perry who had some time to see something in Bucharest – but not enough to have a proper sense and image of the real Romania. We hope very much that this visit would be followed by another one which would be one, two, or even I dare to say three days. Mr. Secretary, thank you very much.

SECRETARY PERRY: Thank you Mr. Tinca. I want to first of all thank the Minister for hosting the visit of myself, my wife and my delegation here. He has been a very gracious host. He has arranged for substantive discussions with the Ministry of Defense, Chief of General Staff, Foreign Minister and President, and these have been extremely valuable to me. I had an opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to the security of Europe, including the stationing of 100,000 troops in Europe which we believe play an important role in assuring peace and stability in Europe.

We believe that Romania has a special place, plays a role of special importance in European security. We welcome their commitment to the trans-Atlantic security relationship, and I would observe that Romania was the first of the nations to join the Partnership for Peace. We had today detailed discussions on Partnership for Peace, ways to make it work together, ways to implement it effectively, including discussions of joint training and joint exercises and including an expansion of our bilateral Military-to-Military relationships. And the details of those will be worked out with our European Command and with the Partnership for Peace headquarters in Mons, but many important ideas were developed today along that line.

I also wanted to get on my visit here the assessment of senior Romanian government officials about the current crisis in former Yugoslavia, in Bosnia. I got a very valuable assessment, which, as I told the Minister, was worth the trip to Romania just to hear it – the insight that they had in terms of the problems in former republics of Yugoslavia, and what should be done to deal with those problems. With that I think we can turn toward questions from the press.

Q: Mr. Secretary could you give us some idea exactly what type of joint training and exercises you might be talking about, and when those might occur?

SECRETARY PERRY: I can't really do that in detail because this will in the last analysis be determined by Partnership for Peace coordination cell in Mons. What we

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have agreed, was the importance and priority of exercises, that we and Romania would on bilateral basis -- as part of our bilateral working groups -- and through EUCOM, our European Command, that we would work out bilaterally, approaches to exercises, proposals for exercises and then take them to the coordination cell at Mons for the final approval and the establishment of it. This we believe would be an important way of accelerating that whole process, so that it gets moving quickly instead of being delayed by bureaucratic processes.

Q: The question is for Mr. Perry. Do you plan a possible participation of American military in the conflict in Yugoslavia, Bosnia? The American army has studied extensively the Serbian mentality as a military factor.

SECRETARY PERRY: We have, our interest in Bosnia today -- the U.S. national interest -- is twofold. First of all to facilitate in achieving peace programs there, and in that regard we're working with the so-called contact group, which includes the British, French, and Russians, to prepare the peace plan. The second objective we have in Bosnia is to provide humanitarian assistance which can reduce suffering caused by the fighting in that country, and in that regard our military forces have had an extensive activity including airlifts and airdrops and enforcing the no-fly zone which prevents the aerial bombardment of cities in Bosnia.

Q: Mr. Secretary, in your call on President Iliescu and the Defense and Foreign Ministers, did they express concerns about the conflict in Bosnia, like its spread to Romania and other Balkan states and if the warring parties refuse to accept the [inaudible], how can that be prevented?

SECRETARY PERRY: We had detailed discussions on that subject, and the concern of all of the Romanian officials I talked with is the same as the concern of the United States against the spread of that conflict, and the belief that the best way to prevent the spreading of the conflict is to bring about an end to it, to bring about a peace plan. We all agreed that the continued effort, continued pressure on achieving a peace was the appropriate way to go. We had, I think, an excellent discussion also on the fact that the whole region, not just Bosnia, but all of the former Yugoslavia and the neighboring countries would in some way be involved in a transition to a peaceful era in former Republic of Yugoslavia, and that that peace revolution had to include a removal of tensions about borders, had to include a way of dealing, of guaranteeing the rights of ethnic minorities within countries, and this was my understanding of the discussions I had both with the President and the Foreign Minister. I'd invite Minister Tinca to comment on that, to see if I'm accurately representing the Romanian views as well.

MINISTER TINCA: Certainly we are preoccupied with what is happening in Bosnia and in a broader sense what is happening in -- what might be happening -- in the other parts of the former Yugoslavia. It's deontologic, we are a neighbor. But we

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are preoccupied not only in the sense of our security, but also in the sense of economic loss which is coming as a result of the present situation there, and we are preoccupied with what might come from this respect of economic loss, in the future worsening, possible worsening of the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

I agree entirely with what Secretary Perry said, that the main efforts now has to focus on a peace formula to make the conflicts talk and then to try to find out a viable, durable solution for former Yugoslavians' fate. This is very complex effort, it's complex by the parties involved there, and also by some kind of, it's particularly [inaudible]. It's a Yugoslavian phenomenon, and in general terms, a Balkan phenomenon, the situation existing there with all tradition and history, I realize it's difficult to be understood and assimilated by all those who might have a role in facilitating peace solutions and working on the final resolution of the tensions and conflicts there. In a nutshell, we are preoccupied, we want to contribute to lessening the tension and finding a way to cease the conflict and promote a solution for the future space in the former Yugoslavia. Thank you.

Q: What is the U.S. expecting within Partnership for Peace from Romania and what is the place of this cooperation in the future architecture of European security?

MINISTER TINCA: I think this is a question for Secretary Perry. What you are asking me is just to have a guess, and my educated guess after the discussion I had with the Secretary is that the United States is expecting to have a reliable partner in a very solid and long cooperation in this region. You have heard that the United States is renewing its commitment for Europe which includes Western Europe and Eastern Europe, also Romania. We stand ready to be reliable partners for the United States in a quest for peace and stability of Europe; and I have to add also probably prosperity of Europe.

Q: What can you say about Romanian military policy after this first visit in Romania?

SECRETARY PERRY: I'm sorry I didn't understand the question, would you repeat it again?

Q: How can you appreciate the military policy of Romania after this visit and after the talks with Mr. Tinca?

SECRETARY PERRY: I'm impressed with the substantial reform that's been under way in the military here in Romania. I think Minister Tinca has led the way in that regard. They have, he has described to me not only what they have done to date, what they're planning to do in the future, and we plan to assist and cooperate them in future to the greatest extent possible.

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Q: General Rose, the U.N. Forces Commander in Bosnia suggested yesterday that NATO might replace the U.N. forces in case the peace plan is rejected. Do you agree with this idea, and how many U.S. soldiers could be involved in NATO forces, I repeat, if the peace plan is rejected?

SECRETARY PERRY: That's premature for me to speculate. The peace plan, whatever response to the peace plan is made today or tomorrow, will be considered in great detail by the contact group on Wednesday and I would not want to speculate either on what the Bosnian and Serbian governments are going to say to them or what the contact group would say in response to that. That's reaching too far out to try to forecast complex events.

Q: Secretary Perry, a few months ago, Congressman Robert Gilman (sic) had presented in the U.S. Congress a document which is called "NATO Expansion Act of 1994". Could you think that this act could become a major foreign policy document for the Clinton administration?

SECRETARY PERRY: I'm not clear on precisely what you're referring to. You're referring to a proposal made by the Congress that is not yet enacted into legislation, am I correct in that?

Q: No, this document states about the fact that until 10 January 1999 all the Visegrad group will become full NATO membership, and this document has been presented in the U.S. Congress by Congressman Robert Gilman. I asked you if you think that this NATO Expansion Act of 1994 could become a major foreign policy document for this administration.

SECRETARY PERRY: The issue of the expansion of NATO, both the timing and the countries involved in it, is extremely complex. It is also very clear that the United States is only one of the nations that would have to make that decision. So, I don't think I can forecast what future expansion would be except to say that there's not going to be any expansion of NATO or in the member nations in the near term, that would be coming up at some time in the medium to far term, and my estimate is it would be limited in numbers. This is a complex working alliance and it takes time to assimilate new members to it, and the new members have to bring certain properties, certain capabilities to that, so I do not see any near term or any very rapid expansion of NATO.

Q: Mr. Secretary did you raise any political issues of the U.S.-Romanian relationship during your talks with Romanian officials today, and specifically did you raise the issue of Marshal Antonescu, the wartime leader of Romania, and if so, what was the message?

SECRETARY PERRY: We discussed a whole host of defense and military issues. I

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have always had the opinion that those are political also inherently, and indeed one of the major arguments for discussing, one of the major reasons for having these military-to-military relationships is that they help facilitate better political relationships between countries. In some areas and some countries the military can lead the way in this regard. No, I did not bring up the question of Marshal Antonescu.

Q: Thank you very much.

Q: Mr. Secretary, in the Partnership for Peace cooperation discussions, did you analyze what form would this take concretely, bearing in mind that the Serbs – the Bosnian Serbs – might likely reject the plan and that the embargo would be lifted?

SECRETARY PERRY: We talked mostly about, first of all the importance of focusing and emphasizing on reaching a political settlement, a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Bosnia, and about how at such time that that was achieved, how the attention would have to focus on the areas surrounding Bosnia, including the neighboring countries, as a way of dealing with a very complex difficult set of political problems, of which Bosnia represents only one small piece.

Q: For your excellencies, American and Romanian defense ministers, one question: Moldova fights to become an independent and neutral state. How do you appreciate Moldova's desire for neutrality in the conflict area of the Balkans? How do you plan to support this endeavor?

MINISTER TINCA: You may think of a kind of neutrality, but to really talk about neutrality, we must first see "neutrality" between what sides. By the way Europe looks today, it is not clear yet whether there are going to be two sides still, or there will be just one Europe. So, it is a little difficult to answer your question, at least from the viewpoint of security issues, as long as not all the parameters of the problems are well defined.

Q: Mr. Perry we have programs in English for the United States tonight. Would you please care to make a message on your visit for your fellow countrymen? A very brief message for the American listeners we have.

SECRETARY PERRY: I would only want to thank the Romanian government and the Romanian people for hosting this visit. We had a very useful and a very productive visit. I had only a small opportunity to meet many Romanian people, although I have met many Romanian people in the United States and I have enjoyed their friendship and their companionship there. I believe that we are well embarked on a period of deep and growing friendship between the United States and Romania, that extends well beyond the military fields that we are talking about today.

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MINISTER TINCA: Before concluding, I would like to thank you very much and at the same time to ask you a personal favor. When I was in Washington and we have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation between the American army and the Romanian army, I missed the occasion to have a photo opportunity with Secretary Perry. Secretary Perry at that time was involved in the North Korean crisis, and due to that contingency I missed the photo opportunity in Washington. Now, with your permission, we would be acting as we were supposed to do in Washington and have this photo opportunity, which for me would be let's say a memory I have to cherish all along my life. This would not be a new memorandum. It's the memorandum which was signed in Washington, and what we are doing now is just a photo opportunity to recover the loss of that occasion in Washington.

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